

CITY OF GREENBELT, MARYLAND

TO: City Council

VIA: Michael P. McLaughlin *MPM*
City Manager

FROM: David E. Moran *DEM*
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SUBJ: Use of Shuttle-UM by Greenbelt Residents

Background

As Council is aware, the General Assembly passed legislation (HB 1005) this past Session which allows municipal residents to ride the University of Maryland Shuttle (Shuttle-UM) who are not otherwise eligible based on their University affiliation. The legislation requires that the municipality enter into an MOU agreement with the University and pay a fee. This program sunsets in 2014.

Last week I met with Sara Imhulse, Riverdale Park Town Manager and former College Park Assistant Manager, and Chantal Cotton, College Park Assistant to the City Manager. We discussed the program and how best for Greenbelt and Riverdale Park to approach the University regarding our potential interest in it.

College Park Program

The program began in fall 2008 for the City of College Park only. The initial General Assembly legislation was scheduled to sunset in 2011. College Park paid a \$10,000 fee the first year. This fee entitled College Park to issue up to 1,000 passes for their residents. In the second year they paid \$5,000 for reduced service (no access to the Route 1 Shuttle). The fee was \$6,000 for the third year (College Park negotiated restoration of the Route 1 shuttle. The University wanted the full \$10,000 paid, but these decisions were made post-Budget and the University agreed to accept \$6,000 as a compromise). College Park handles the printing and distribution of the applications and passes to residents. College Park issued 257, 340 and 350 passes, respectively, during the past three years.

While the number of passes increased each year, ridership has not. Shuttle drivers are required to keep ridership statistics. (Both College Park and the University believe the record keeping to be imperfect.) Nonetheless, these statistics show ridership is relatively flat since the program began. College Park surveyed passholders and learned that 19% never used the Shuttle; 32% used it 1-4

times/year; 17% used it 1-4 times/month. 26% used it 1-4 times/week and only 6% used it 5+ times/week.

College Park's current MOU expires on 9/1/11. Initially the University was pushing to return to the \$10,000 fee. However College Park has been pushing back and it appears that now the fee might be \$5,000 annually.

Shuttle-UM Service in Greenbelt

There are currently four Shuttle-UM routes that serve the City of Greenbelt in the Fall and Spring. Shuttle-UM does not run when the University is closed (holidays, spring break, inclement weather, etc.) and only serves Beltway Plaza on weekends. The routes are listed below. Schedules and route maps are attached.

Route 101-Beltway Plaza: Saturday & Sunday service between the College Park campus and Beltway Plaza

Route 129-Franklin Park: Monday-Friday service between the College Park campus, and Greenbelt Metro, Franklin Park and Berwyn Heights.

Route 130-Greenbelt: Monday-Friday service between the College Park campus and Greenbelt Road, Center City and Greenbelt East.

Route 131-Franklin Park: Monday-Friday evening service between the College Park campus, Franklin Park and two other apartment communities.

The routes change significantly in the Summer. Service intervals are reduced significantly and the Beltway Plaza route is eliminated.

Route 106 – Franklin Park/Greenbelt: Monday-Friday service between the College Park campus, Franklin Park and Center City.

Route 119 – Greenbelt South: Monday-Friday service between the College Park campus, Berwyn Heights, Westchester Park and Greenbelt East.

Summary

It is unclear how many Greenbelt residents would use this service. Those who are affiliated with the University already have access to Shuttle-UM. Route 130 might be the most attractive because it functions somewhat like a circulator by touching all three sections of the City. However, its circulation is one directional, meaning that a rider wanting to get from Center City to Greenbelt East would have to travel through the campus or disembark on Greenbelt Road and wait for the next eastbound Shuttle.

Greenbelt has not approached the University about implementing this program here. It is believed we could implement a similar program to the one in College Park for the same cost (\$5,000) since Greenbelt and College Park are similar in size. However, Greenbelt is actually served by more Shuttle-UM routes than College Park which could result in the University seeking a higher fee to provide resident access on all four Greenbelt routes.

State legislation is silent on the fee amount, # of passes, etc. The Shuttle-UM system is fully funded by mandatory student activity fees and fees paid by businesses or complexes that want the shuttle to run in their area. There is little cost to the University to add additional riders (some administrative cost, minor wear & tear, etc). The University's position is that this fee is necessary to "satisfy" the student body since they currently bear most of the cost.

If such a program were implemented in Greenbelt, a City department (likely Recreation) would have to process applications, issue passes, maintain records, etc. City staff would recommend surveying passholders to help assess the value of the program. The FY 2012 Budget does not contain funding for this potential program. However, Council allocated \$20,000 in the Reserve Appropriation for unforeseen expenses.

Council direction is sought.